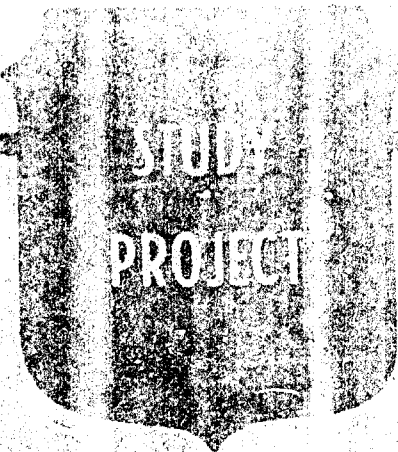


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U.S.-SOVIET MILITARY COOPERATION:  
AN EXERCISE IN EQUIVOISE

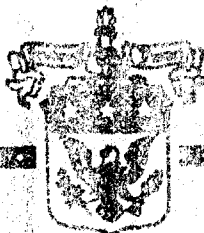
BY

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**USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER**

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AN EXERCISE IN EQUIPOISE**

**AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT**

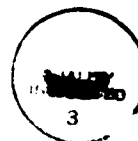
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## **ABSTRACT**

**AUTHOR:** James L. Spring, Colonel, U.S. Army

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On November 9, 1989, the world witnessed the beginning of the end of communism. The fall of the Berlin Wall symbolically signaled the subsequent demise of the Warsaw Pact and the eventual disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Following nearly fifty years of Cold War hostility and mistrust between the United States and its archetypal enemy, the Soviet Union which began to emerge revealed a newfound sense of openness, conscience, and candor. Not only had the "new Soviets" developed a taste for democratic principles and free market economics, they also demonstrated uncharacteristic willingness to solicit technical and financial assistance from the West. The ultimate evidence of this remarkable metamorphosis was reflected in the Soviet Union's unprecedented support of U.S. policy in the recent Gulf War with Iraq.

Given the dramatic lessening of tension between the two former superpower adversaries, the door has opened to a new phenomena: U.S.-Soviet military cooperation. Six such initiatives are discussed herein: Moving to a Professional Army, Building a National Guard, United Nations Peacekeeping, Exchanging Comradeship, Nation Building, and Supporting Arms Destruction. It is proposed that such collaborative efforts will foster a more stable globe, decrease the potential for future U.S.-Soviet conflict, and provide humanitarian relief and assistance to the Third World.

## PREFACE

In view of the evolutionary nature of change which characterizes the new Soviet landscape, it has been difficult to seize upon a snapshot in time during which major change was not occurring on almost a weekly basis. While every effort has been made to incorporate late breaking events, it was necessary to suspend the calendar in order to bring this project to closure. Consequently, certain assumptions regarding the future of the Soviet Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States have been made.

It is assumed that the Commonwealth of Independent States will absorb all or nearly all of the independent republics, to the extent that its membership will largely be representative of the former Soviet Union; that the Commonwealth will honor all treaties currently in force with the U.S. and its allies, to include the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty; that military reform, the democratization process, and the shift to a market economy will continue; that Defense Minister Yevgeny Shaposhnikov and the Soviet armed forces will peacefully transition to the Commonwealth; that the Commonwealth will maintain some facsimile of a central Army and that independent national guard forces will evolve at the republic level; that whomever emerges as the eventual leader of the Commonwealth will generally observe the same democratic principles espoused by former Soviet President

Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Given the transition still underway between the Soviet Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the two entities are referred to herein in synonymous terms. Reference to the "Soviets" or to the "Soviet people" is made in a generic sense with application to both the Soviet Union and to the Commonwealth.

#### INTRODUCTION

"It was the best of times...it was the worst of times."

#### Tale of Two Cities

Finally. The grand experiment is over. Seventy-four years after the "infamous" Russian revolution of October 1917, there is at once a second, more resounding revolution which continues to emerge, revealing itself on a daily basis. This second revolt, thrust upon an unprepared world in late August 1991, holds such unprecedented hope for the future that it may eventually become known as the "famous" Russian revolution. Yet, in spite of the

stunning collapse of communism in the very country which gave it birth, there is worldwide euphoria--liberally mixed with widespread uncertainty.

Though not as bloody and thunderous as its 1917 predecessor, the revolution of 1991 is equally remarkable--and perhaps more historic. Remarkable...that a people, whose moral courage and capacity for protest seemed to be irrevocably muted by nearly a century of institutionalized repression, could muster the collective will to overthrow a rotting and methodically violent government. Historic...that this shocking political exorcism was not merely some periodic change in leadership similar to that practiced in the democratic West, but in fact was the cataclysmic death of an entire political system. Indeed, this was a political system that had long commanded international respect and had exported itself along every azimuth of the planet.

Regrettably, this grand experiment with communism exacted a terrible toll on the Soviet people and upon the world community. Within the U.S.S.R. there have been decades of genocide and the gulag, economic hardship, and absolute political repression. Meanwhile, the sad international legacy of Soviet communism is an unstable globe, the proliferation of sophisticated weaponry to the Third World, and an incredible Cold War debt which has all but crippled Western economies. It is fitting then, that no less



a figure than Mikhail Gorbachev should present the eulogy, as he recently declared ideological bankruptcy: "That model has failed. I believe that this is a lesson not only for our people, but for all peoples."<sup>1</sup>

### ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

As the unshaped yeastiness of change begins to crystallize in the Commonwealth of Independent States, the American government and the U.S. military must exercise wisdom, albeit timely wisdom, in developing a new philosophy of interaction with the former evil empire. Already there is a loud clamor to race across the Russian frontier with a cache of economic aid. Certainly, as the spectre of famine forebodes the approach of winter, the fear of widespread food shortages throughout the Soviet Union clearly mandates that the West take decisive action to avert such calamity.

Appearing to be motivated as much by politics as altruism, Representative Les Aspin nonetheless offered this succinct comment: "We do not want the first winter of freedom after seventy years of communism to be a disaster for the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup> It is the humanitarian thing to do, and it is in our

national interest to facilitate a stable environment within the former Soviet republics. However, U.S. diplomacy must also be patient and balanced--and remain cognizant of the 27,000 nuclear warheads which continue to reside on Soviet soil.

While it is universally agreed that the Soviet economy is beyond repair, absent major surgery, we must be cautious not to throw good money after bad. As the world's largest oil producer, the Soviet Union still possesses massive oil reserves. Further, we should remember that the U.S. is not in this alone. The European community of nations has an even greater geographic, cultural, and economic stake in the outcome than we do. Yet, underscoring the diplomatic dilemma faced by the West is the sobering observation that "there is no known formula for moving from a command economy to a free market."<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, throughout the past seventy-four years, as communism either attracted or coerced a succession of converts to its ranks, the world begrudgingly gained experience in the conversion from free market economies. Now, with this unprecedented collapse of a major communist economy, new ground must be broken.

As evidenced in the aftermath of two world wars, it is the American way to forgive and forget, sometimes to such an extent that critical U.S. interests are damaged in the long term. One must only note the bustling economies of post-World War II Germany and Japan, the foundation for which was laid with

altruistic Yankee goodwill. Given the current state of the U.S. economy--its frightening metamorphosis from the world's foremost creditor nation to the largest debtor nation, and the epidemic inflationary spiral of the federal deficit--we simply must focus a significantly greater level of attention upon domestic issues. Meanwhile, lest our responsibility as a world power be neglected in the process, we are reminded that: "The violent distintegration of the Soviet Union would pose first-order threats to vital American interests."<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, the world which the United States has helped create will not permit a retreat into any posture which too strongly resembles isolationism. As the only remaining superpower, the U.S. must hold its domestic and foreign policy interests in equipoise. With regard to our embryonic relationship with the newly emerging Commonwealth of Independent States, Senator Sam Nunn recently suggested the following approach: "Our most meaningful long term assistance should be in the form of intellectual capital, Western know-how, management training, economic development, and the free exchange of ideas and people."<sup>5</sup>

## U.S.-SOVIET MILITARY COOPERATION

While world leaders and the media seem to have galvanized their energies upon the dominant issue of economic aid to the Soviet Union, there are supplemental initiatives which should be undertaken simultaneously. Never before have the Soviet central government and the individual republics been so openly receptive to Western practices and principles. This almost fanciful predisposition toward things Western is visible along a broad spectrum which includes governmental and economic reform, freedom of the press, expansion of individual liberties, and even a growing indictment of the socialist health care system. Although these are striking examples of communist decay, there is still another which is more startling: the Soviet Army.

Once the proudest and most powerful institutional enclave within the U.S.S.R., understandably off limits to the West, the Soviet Army has not escaped the necessity for reform. In a November 1991 interview with the Moscow News, President Gorbachev fired a major salvo for change: "We cannot live a normal life in our supermilitarized economy. Why should the military-industrial complex be given vast funds, the best resources, the most skilled personnel, and the finest scientists?"<sup>6</sup> These rhetorical comments are not mere populist drivel; they are a stark proclamation made necessary by the reality of impending economic collapse.

Consequently, as a by-product of this anticipated reform movement, there may now be a number of ways in which the U.S. and Soviet armies can work together to build a more stable world.

#### **MOVING TO A PROFESSIONAL ARMY**

General Yevgeny I. Shaposhnikov, newly installed Marshal of Aviation and Defense Minister of the Soviet Union, recently called for a move toward a professional Army and announced a radical reorganization of the Soviet High Command. Conscription has long been an issue of dissent throughout the republics because of their broad ethnic diversity and the widespread practice of harrassing new recruits, especially those from ethnic minorities.

Remarkably, between 1985-1990 as many as 15,000 conscripts died during their military service. This was more than were killed during the ten years of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. Too, in spite of the ethnic diversity of the Soviet military, the officer corps has always been overwhelmingly Russian.<sup>7</sup>

In a scorching indictment of the Soviet Army's abysmal record of human rights violations, Soviet scholar Scott R. McMichael recently offered these sorrowful insights:

"A commission of the Supreme Soviet, investigating peacetime deaths of servicemen, concluded in 1991 that 310,000 Soviet soldiers had died in service since the end of the Second World War, an average of nearly 7,000 per year. The commission attributed almost half the deaths to suicide, 20 per cent to barracks violence, and only 10 per cent to accidents."

McMichael cited a separate report which implied that 75-80 per cent of all deaths and 70 per cent of serious injuries were due to violence.<sup>8</sup>

The primary cause of these deaths is both ethnic rivalry and an unofficial but institutionalized caste system known as "dedovshchina," in which new recruits in effect become the personal slaves of older conscripts. Far more violent and repressive than the relatively innocent U.S. practice of hazing basic trainees or fraternity pledges, new Soviet soldiers are forced to forfeit their pay and valuables, plus perform personal services that range from cleaning and laundry to being used as male prostitutes.<sup>9</sup>

Those soldiers who either refuse or seek protection from the chain of command are subjected to severe beatings or, in some cases, become the victims of prearranged "accidents." According to McMichael, "Only eight per cent of the abusive acts perpetrated in the services are reported and only two per cent are prosecuted."<sup>10</sup> In the absence of command intervention, it is not surprising that such an alarming number of Soviet soldiers seek escape via desertion or suicide.<sup>11</sup>

Having responded to our own national distaste for the draft following the Vietnam years, shifting from a conscript Army to a volunteer force is a process in which the United States has considerable experience. In fact, the process of sharing that experience has already begun. For two weeks in September 1991, Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government hosted twenty-eight senior Soviet military officers for a crash course on the relationship between the armed forces and the civilian government in the U.S. General Colin S. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the students: "Democracy is not an easy form of government for military professionals. We subordinate ourselves totally to the will of the people and their elected representatives."<sup>12</sup>

The professional force envisioned by Defense Minister Shaposhnikov would not be a mirror image of the all volunteer U.S. military. Although it would shift to civilian control, the proposed Soviet model would be a hybrid mixture of conscripts and contracted, volunteer professionals. The Soviets consider a fully professional army as prohibitively expensive, and there are certain specialties which do not require a highly trained, professional soldier.<sup>13</sup>

Under General Shaposhnikov's plan:

"Conscripted soldiers would serve an initial six months in a training unit learning a military specialty, normally in their home republics. After six months, they would be offered a contract for three to five years on the following terms: free food, clothing, housing, and vacation travel, plus a monthly wage of 300-500 rubles. Soldiers who refuse to sign an initial contract would be obligated to complete one more year of service. Before completing the full eighteen month tour, conscripts would have one more chance to accept a long term contract."<sup>14</sup>

Those soldiers who successfully completed their initial contract would be offered subsequent five year contracts with increasingly greater pay and benefits. Apart from this package, however, there are two fundamental improvements which indeed reflect new thinking on the Defense Minister's part. First, this plan reduces the length of conscripted service from two years to eighteen months, probably as a concession to the republics and to Soviet youth in general, both of which have a pervasive dislike of the draft. Second, when compared to the slave wages of 60-100 rubles per month currently paid to conscripts, the proposed monthly wage of 300-500 rubles may speak directly to the draftee's pocketbook.

Although there are basic differences between Shaposhnikov's proposal and the U.S. approach, there is a broad common ground from which we can provide advice and assistance. This includes such programs as recruiting, reenlistment, retirement, family advocacy, quality of life, communities of excellence, NCO



development, and especially soldiers' rights. In view of the fundamental discrediting of its Marxist-Leninist communist foundations, the Soviet military is now ready for conversion to a professional force built upon legal, ethical, and moral standards reflected in the U.S. model.

While General Powell's previously cited comments at Harvard University were surprisingly basic from a Western perspective, they are perhaps demonstrative that Soviet military reform is just now grappling with the fundamentals. Whether assisting with the Soviet transformation to a professional force or facilitating its "democratization," there is a key role for the United States to play should the Soviet Union solicit our help. This would be a rare opportunity to influence the restructuring of the Soviet military and to inspire democratic practices. It would also accomplish an even greater coup by fostering trust and friendship with our former adversary.

#### **BUILDING A NATIONAL GUARD**

A second major area in which the U.S. can assist is with the development of a national guard system throughout the remaining eleven or twelve republics. Though conceptually the republics might still contribute manpower to a part volunteer central Soviet Army, their territorial defense forces would remain under

local control and be subject to central authority only in a national crisis and only with consent of the republics.<sup>15</sup> Empowerment of ethnic minorities through the creation of "state" militias flies in the face of the age old Soviet practice of ethnic suppression. Furthermore, the demise of a strong central government, which had held ethnic rivalries in check for decades, may make it more possible for long standing inter-republic bitterness to resurface. Therefore, this joint involvement of the republics in both their territorial defense forces and the central Soviet Army could be an important stabilizing factor.

Although it may be somewhat unnatural for the Soviets, maintenance of a harmonious relationship between the state militia and the federal army is a particular strong suit of the U.S. We have the capacity to teach both the fundamentals and the nuances of this seemingly uneasy partnership to the Soviets. By offering our assistance at this early juncture, we can facilitate success by recommending adoption of certain ground rules which will minimize internal strife as the Commonwealth of Independent States matures.

The most logical choice to spearhead this initiative is the National Guard Bureau, through whose offices could be sent technical advisers to both the central government and to the various republics. Apart from the obvious benefits of helping the Soviets through this difficult molting process, it is also

important that we make lasting friendships within the republics as they begin to emerge as sovereign independent nation states.

#### **UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING**

With the breaking apart of all the old Cold War paradigms, a third major thrust of collaborative teamwork which is ripe for partnership is our direct cooperation in United Nations peacekeeping efforts. This would require an amendment to existing UN procedures which prohibit members of the UN Security Council from participating in peacekeeping operations. Previously this was not considered even remotely possible because neither of the two superpowers could be assured of objective neutrality. Too, the independent presence of either the U.S. or the U.S.S.R., possessed of their respective hidden agendas, could only serve as an incendiary stimulus in an already volatile situation. However, buoyed by the credible nature of their UN cooperation during the recent Gulf War, it may now be possible to use that success as a stepping stone to joint UN responsibilities in the future.

Assuming that other direct contacts between the U.S. and Soviet armies will generate a "friendship dividend," the resulting increase in trust could facilitate the ultimate creation of a joint U.S.-Soviet UN peacekeeping force. As the

world community witnesses continued cooperation between the former superpower adversaries, void of the old hostilities and selfish interests, it too may begin to trust this burgeoning relationship. Since this would be turning over new ground for the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as for the "league of nations," the first steps should be small.

Perhaps an agreeable arrangement might be for the U.S., the Soviets, and other nations to each contribute battalion size forces, all under the command of a carefully selected "non-aligned" country. While subordination of American forces to a foreign commander would run counter to traditional Yankee practice, perhaps the narrow scope of this particular operation would result in a more flexible U.S. position on this issue. Surely there is great potential for powerful bonds to stem from the joint planning and training which would be necessary to mould this force into an effective, close-knit team. Such American-Soviet comradeship would undoubtedly reduce the risk for superpower conflict in the future and would significantly elevate the prestige and credibility of the United Nations as an effective organization.<sup>16</sup>

#### **EXCHANGING COMRADESHIP**

A fourth focus of cooperation which could yield substantial

dividends is an immediate expansion of exchange programs between the two armies. The insight and perspective generated by the interpenetration of U.S. and Soviet forces would unquestionably be a "peace multiplier." Exchange programs will permit our officers and soldiers to experience firsthand the humanness of one another and to be less vulnerable to the stereotypical propaganda of the past.

In an April 1991 briefing at NATO headquarters last spring, General John R. Galvin, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, proposed that the future may find NATO and the Soviets as allies facing common enemies such as fundamentalist, totalitarian regimes with sophisticated arsenals. He further stated that "the alliance needed to communicate with the Soviet military on all levels." As an example, General Galvin recommended that NATO move quickly to open its most sensitive training centers to Soviet and East European officers. He viewed swift adoption of such initiatives as clear signals to former Warsaw Pact nations that NATO itself was changing, that it would be less threatening in the future.<sup>17</sup>

Direct exchanges should of course be bi-directional so that members of both armed forces may achieve greater understanding. However, when coordinating arrangements for Soviet military visitors to the U.S., we should attempt to close the generational gap by hosting as many field grade and junior officers as possible. It is with this younger generation that our future

lies. Too, rather than focus exclusively on senior officer exchanges as in the past, the addition of small unit exchanges at the company or platoon level could provide even broader exposure.

Given the traditional isolation of the Soviet republics, exchanges must not be limited to large cities and military facilities only. Soviet soldiers should be introduced to a representative sampling of the typical American way of life, to include visits in homes, schools, rural communities, etc. There is much to be gained from such cross cultural exposure. The lasting value of these direct exchanges is so important that the U.S. must also be willing to subsidize Soviet expenses, particularly during the short term while the Soviet economy seeks recovery.

#### **NATION BUILDING**

The fifth area for collaboration may be the most idealistic --nation building. Both countries have a long history of providing this type of Third World assistance through the use of selected military units whose missions and equipment lend themselves to such a calling. Medical and engineer units could make the greatest impact.

The joint deployment of U.S.-Soviet military medical teams

to crisis spots around the world could be a monumental help to numerous countries faced with epidemic health care problems caused by drought, famine, natural disasters, and ignorance. Across the globe many Third World countries provide unwitting sanctuary to a host of diseases which have all but disappeared from Western society. This is generally the result of widespread ignorance regarding sanitation and hygiene practices.

To a large extent the battle is against cultural conditioning as much as the disease itself. In many rural villages, people have lived a certain way for centuries and see no linkage between illness and their traditional lifestyle. Cohabitation with domestic farm animals and consumption of polluted drinking water are but two common examples. Consequently, any worthwhile health care program must have a credible education component.

The most ideal approach would be for U.S.-Soviet medics to train local health care workers who could then attempt to institutionalize such programs long after the joint military teams had departed. Indeed, the overarching philosophy must be to empower the indigenous population to care for its long term medical needs rather than to leave behind any actual or symbolic tribute to the U.S.-Soviet partnership.

Year after year millions of disadvantaged people die simply

because they lack natural immunity to disease and because their country does not have the medical resources to protect them. Mass inoculation must clearly be the top priority of U.S.-Soviet medical teams. There are over three hundred diseases which are common to both man and beast. Since so many Third World peoples live with or in close proximity to their animals, it is imperative that both villagers and animals alike be inoculated.

Poor diet, unsanitary conditions, and repeated exposure to disease often result in an inordinately high number of children born with birth defects which might have been prevented by education, inoculation, or improved hygiene. However, since such children generally do not have access to health care, many needlessly grow into adulthood with some physical deformity which could have been corrected by a simple surgical procedure. Certainly this is a segment of the Third World population which must be specifically targeted by U.S.-Soviet medical personnel. There is no limit to the goodwill which could be generated by such humanitarian gesture.

Not only could medical teams assist with mass inoculation programs etc, they could also make significant progress in the prevention and reversal of blindness. It is estimated that cataract operations could restore the sight of one-third of all blind people in the world today. The establishment of preliminary joint eye clinics throughout the Third World could be



the backbone of a more far reaching program in which U.S. and Soviet ophthalmologists train local specialists to set up clinics of their own.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, the joint deployment of U.S.-Soviet military engineer units could also leave a dramatic long term legacy to poor countries worldwide. With over half the Third World's childhood deaths attributed to dysentery, much of which is directly related to the absence of potable water, a major thrust of small, mobile engineer teams could be the drilling of wells in village after village. Meanwhile, larger joint engineer construction units could build roads, schools, and housing. This would open remote areas to commerce, educate future generations of children, and provide shelter for the world's homeless and refugee populations.

What better use of our armed forces than for such peaceful, humanitarian purposes. Working together in a joint venture of this nature would enable the world's two premiere military forces to harness their power for the common good of mankind. In time, perhaps the small, poor nations of the world could learn to respect the United States and the Soviet Union not from fear--but from their goodness.

## **SUPPORTING ARMS DESTRUCTION**

Of all the proposed areas of U.S.-Soviet military cooperation discussed thus far, perhaps the joint destruction of Soviet conventional, chemical, and nuclear armaments would represent the greatest contribution to mankind. Although in recent weeks and months the Soviet Union has made good faith commitments to destroy much of its deadly Cold War arsenal, it is increasingly questionable whether economic breakdown and the steady disintegration of the central government will accommodate scheduled destruction milestones.

Both the growing instability throughout the Soviet Union, and the sheer number of conventional armaments which must be destroyed, render suspect even the best intentions expressed by the Soviet leadership. Under the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, the Soviets have already agreed to the destruction/conversion of nearly 23,000 items of treaty limited equipment within a forty month period, plus another 14,500 items located east of the Urals.<sup>19</sup> Conformance with treaty imposed timetables will demand a wholesale commitment of Soviet manpower and resources during a volatile period of chaos and uncertainty. Consequently, a firm offer of U.S. assistance could make the difference in whether the Soviets maintain a focus upon their CFE treaty obligations.

Although no binding agreement currently exists, bilateral talks with the Soviets have revealed an openness regarding the destruction of chemical weapons as well. However, progress has been slow, primarily because the Soviets acknowledge their inability to destroy nearly 40,000 tons of chemical agents in a benign and timely manner. Fundamental to this process is the existence of an adequate number of suitable facilities and the technical know-how to develop a safe and efficient destruction plan. Since neither appears to exist,<sup>20</sup> this vacuum could be filled by Western financial aid and U.S./NATO technical assistance. Given its geographic proximity to the problem, it is safe to assume that the European community would be willing partners in such a joint venture.

With regard to its nuclear arsenal, the Soviets had previously agreed to destroy hundreds of delivery vehicles and SS-18 silos as part of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Subsequently, in October 1991, President Gorbachev also agreed to further reduce strategic warheads, destroy land-based tactical nuclear weapons, and eliminate an unspecified percentage of nuclear warheads within its air defense and naval communities. It is estimated that Gorbachev's "extra-START" declaration added approximately 10,000 items and 50-100 tons of additional plutonium which will also require destruction.<sup>21</sup> Clearly this represents another good faith commitment which internal circumstances may preclude the Soviets from honoring without

Western financial and technical assistance. Furthermore, it is decidedly in U.S. interests that destruction begin at the earliest possible time, since the Soviet nuclear arsenal is highly vulnerable to black market sale or transfer to unstable terrorist or totalitarian regimes throughout the world.

Superimposed over the economic and political impediments which degrade Soviet progress in this massive undertaking are fresh memories of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl. There is widespread distrust of the central government's competence and ethical purity in handling such matters. This is evidenced by the emergence of a so-called "Green" movement whose charter is to protect the environment, present ecological objections, and to hold the bureaucracy accountable to the populace.

Following years of government sanctioned abuse of the Soviet landscape, these latter-day ecology groups are wielding increasingly greater power and influence. The anti-nuclear sentiment, aligned with an emerging environmental sophistication at the grassroots level, may become a force to be reckoned with in the establishment of nuclear and chemical weapons destruction facilities.

It is paradoxical that the Soviet people proudly declare their individual republics as nuclear free zones, while simultaneously there is such pervasive mistrust of the very

government which must necessarily preside over the purification process. It is here that the U.S. can make a key contribution to arms destruction within the Soviet Union. Apart from the practical value of assisting with the mechanics involved, U.S. partnership could significantly bolster confidence by serving as a symbol to the Soviet people that Western know-how will work to keep their land and their communities safe from disaster.

#### CONCLUSION

It is difficult to assess the protracted disintegration of a modern superpower since there is no historic precedent. As we move toward a more interactive, mutually supportive relationship with the Commonwealth of Independent States, we must be both enthusiastically receptive--and selectively restrained. This delicate exercise in diplomatic equipoise requires much wisdom. While the Western world races to embrace its former adversary, we must insure that idealism and naivete do not precipitate the inadvertent transfer of sensitive military technology which could be used against the U.S. and its allies in a different time and space.

On the surface it is as though the Soviet people must travel

across a private wasteland without benefit of map or compass in order to discover a new identity. However, regardless of how the Soviet drama unfolds, the U.S. has unavoidably been cast in a major supporting role. Having grown comfortable with the calculus of the Cold War, the worrisome challenge now facing U.S. decision makers is that the creation of history is never easy.

The success or failure of this precarious adventure will rest upon the ability of the Soviet leadership to make substantive political, economic, and military reforms. With regard to political change, the Marxist-Leninist structure is all but gone, its remnants just one of many competing ideological forces seeking adoption. With reference to the economy, nearly all other important changes which must occur throughout the Commonwealth are linked to economic stability and free market reform--both of which will require immense patience from the Soviet people. And, finally, regarding the armed forces, far reaching military reform will likely continue, provided political and economic reforms are successful. Absent that, impatience within the armed forces could result in the eradication of democratic and free market principles as quickly as they appeared.

As H. L. Mencken said, "For every complicated, complex question there is an answer that is simple, easy, and wrong." As Yogi Berra said, "It's getting harder and harder to make pre-

dictions, especially about the future." Indeed, with regard to the emerging Soviet enigma, there are no simple answers--and the future is resolutely unclear. What is clear, however, is that it is in the national interest of the United States to support political, economic, and military reform within the Commonwealth of Independent States for as long as this remarkable opportunity presents itself.

## ENDNOTES

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3. Graham Allison and Robert Blackwill, "America's Stake in the Soviet Future," Foreign Affairs, 70 (Summer 1991): 84.
4. Ibid., p. 78.
5. Sam Nunn, "Challenge to NATO in the 1990s," Survival 32 (January-February 1990): 6.
6. Fred Hiatt, "U.S. Official Cautious on Aid for Soviet Military Conversion," Washington Post, 6 November 1991, p. A 20.
7. Ian Kemp, "Soviet Army Unravels," Jane's Defense Weekly 16 (14 September 1991): 470.
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15. Condoleezza Rice, "A New Army for a New State," Time, 16 September 1991, p. 36.
16. Marshall Brement, "U.S.-U.S.S.R.: Possibilities in Partnership," Foreign Policy, 84 (Fall 1991): 110.
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